DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 858 UD 016 976

AUTHOR Samuels, Victoria
TITLE Nowhere To be Found; A Literature Review and Annotated Bibliography on White Working Class Women. Working Paper Series Number 13.
INSTITUTION American Jewish Committee, New York, N.Y. Inst. on Pluralism and Group Identity.
PUB DATE Jun 75
NOTE 32p.
AVAILABLE FROM Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity, American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 ($1.25)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Annotated Bibliographies; *Caucasians; Employment; Job Market; *Labor Force; Mass Media; *Middle Class; Personal Values; Self Esteem; Social Attitudes; *Social Values; *Working Women

ABSTRACT

Combining insights from sociology, psychology, marketing, the mass media, and other fields, in addition to an attempt to put the "state of the art" into a contemporary context, this literature review highlights significant studies which provide insights into white middle class working women in American society. It emphasizes their values and perceptions of themselves and of other groups. Also included is an annotated bibliography of additional literature of interest in related areas. (Author/BS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

WORKING PAPER SERIES

ED139858

NUMBER 13

NOWHERE TO BE FOUND

A LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON WHITE WORKING CLASS WOMEN

UD016976

by

VICTORIA SAMUELS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

INSTITUTE ON PLURALISM AND GROUP IDENTITY

The Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity believes that if America is to survive as a healthy, pluralistic nation we must respond to the needs of individuals who identify as members of groups and give attention to the broad spectrum of group agendas. At the same time, every precaution must be taken to assure that competing group demands do not deteriorate into polarization, negativism or destructive group chauvinism.

An outgrowth of the National Project on Ethnic America, the Institute's aim is to bring the social sciences and the humanities into closer contact with the values and life styles of America's diverse groupings. We concentrate on developing effective links between scholars, practitioners, government officials and constituencies; formulating new policies and programs related to group status, group identity and group diversity; and publishing and disseminating materials designed to foster better understanding.

It is our belief that the goals of promoting the common good and developing cooperation and coalition are best achieved by recognizing diversity rather than ignoring it.

NOWHERE TO BE FOUND

A LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

ON WHITE WORKING CLASS WOMEN

VICTORIA SAMUELS

The literature review that follows is an exploration into existing work on the images of white working class women in American society, their values, and their perceptions of themselves and of other groups -- middle class feminists, in particular. It is part of a larger study that will probe the communications barriers between America's working class and middle class women.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, there are enormous gaps in the literature. First, few of the best studies of working class people deal specifically with women. Then, unfortunately, most of the studies focusing on this group were completed before the re-emergence of the Women's Movement and therefore lack a degree of relevance. Finally, the work that deals with the images of women in the media concentrates almost exclusively on middle class women.

With that caveat, what follows is: (1) a review of the more significant studies that provide insights into working class women; and (2) an annotated bibliography of additional items of interest in related areas. This is not an exhaustive review, but one that attempts to both look at the existing literature in a slightly different light, combining insights from sociology, psychology, marketing, the mass media and other fields; and to put the "state of the art" into a contemporary context.

In doing so, commenting on the role of the mass media is unavoidable. As the new Women's Movement enters its second decade, it still has not succeeded in developing a broad-based understanding of the scope of its concerns among America's 40 million working class women: for this the mass media must accept a degree of responsibility. In a society as diverse as ours, the media act as the connector, the translator between groups that rarely come together. The media stand between the largely middle class Women's Movement, attempting to communicate its "message," and working class women, generally at the receiving end with little opportunity to make themselves heard. Endowed with the power to forge a positive vision of each group's reality, the media have

minimized this role. And too often they tend to portray both the Women's Movement and working class women negatively, unnecessarily estranging the two groups from each other.

More often than not, coverage of the Movement tends to be denigrating. Rather than elucidating issues of concern to all women, it tends to heighten the Movement's more sensational aspects. We are more often exposed to incidents like bra-burning, and legitimate but emotionally polarizing issues like lesbianism and rhetoric about male oppression than we are to serious dialogue on job and pay equality, education, health, maternity and disability benefits, child care, credit, and insurance. As a natural consequence of unbalanced presentations, the essence of the Women's Movement is distorted in the minds of millions of Americans.

A recent example of the tendency to sensationalize the Movement was the coverage of International Women's Day, March 8, 1975, in New York City. Although there was some responsible reporting (done mostly by women), the photographs and film footage showed not unity and commonality of purpose, not pride in being a woman, but huge placards saying "Lesbians Unite" and "Down with the Catholic Church" -- two slogans that are anathema to many working class women in particular. One station spent considerable time interviewing the "local crazy" who roams the city covered head-to-foot in anti-feminist buttons. He talked. We laughed. But what were we really laughing at? Did we learn anything about a Movement that is struggling for equal rights and opportunities for over half the population?

At the same time as the more serious goals of the Movement are generally obscured, the working class woman is, with rare exception, the media's invisible person. In those instances where she is visible, the portrayal is usually a negative one. She's spotlighted in the news when she's throwing rocks at a school bus filled with black students or giving her support to a political candidate like George Wallace. In advertising she's either the fat Italian who should know about paper towels from all that messy pasta or the "lady plumber" fixing the sink in someone else's $50,000 home. On daytime television's soap operas, she's an uncomfortable guest in an elegant home, who has never eaten lobster Newburg and is unsure of what silverware to use. On game shows, she's the "screaming mimie" dressed in a ridiculous costume. In prime time television, she's Edith Bunker, Archie's "Dingbat."

As Studs Terkel put it, "All of us are victims of stereotypes -- whether we be middle class, blue collar, or non-white. A certain attitude is ascribed to us, cartoon-like in nature: the middle class, smug, complacent, indifferent; the black, hostile, pushy, anti-white; the blue collar, hawkish, semi-literate, racist. The half-truths of

stereotype, in times of tension, buries the truth of a people, a truth that is often ambiguous."[1]

Both the Women's Movement and working class women are buried in the "half-truths of stereotype" that emerge from the media. And what is done for the sake of sensationalism -- the "hot news item," or the "colorful story" -- is often not understood in terms of its effect. Because the mass media are dominated by white, male, middle class values, it is difficult for it to accurately interpret and understand a sex and class different from their own. The media's myopic presentations of both working class women and of the Women's Movement rob these groups, as well as the rest of the American public, of the opportunity to understand and appreciate different subgroups of our society.

Who is the working class woman that the Movement often alienates and the media make invisible? What is the working class milieu and what place does she occupy within it? How does the working class woman differ from her middle class counterpart and how does the media relate to those differences? The answers to these questions are sought in this literature review. Yet, as we begin with an attempt to close these gaps in our understanding, we will discover that only minimal progress can be made in closing them. For just as the reality of working class women has been largely ignored in our society, so too has it been neglected in our society's study and research.

WORKING CLASS LIFE

For an overview of the frustration of being ignored by a society that validates only middle class life and experiences, there is no better source than Richard Sennett's and Jonathan Cobb's *Hidden Injuries of Class*. Having conducted over 150 in-depth interviews with working class people, these two sociologists are critical of pollsters for their inability to deal with the ambiguities, subtleties and contradictions in peoples' reactions to issues. It is this subtlety they sought, the contradictions to explain.

Even when they play by the rules, "the working class has not gotten its fair share in this society,"[2] postulate the authors. The outside world overworks and underpays for a boring, insecure and unstable job. "It then overtaxes for services they rarely see benefiting themselves, for innovations that upset their little hold on security, and for mistakes that intellectuals, not they, make."[3] Urban renewal destroyed their neighborhoods while they learned about governmental efforts (however exaggerated by the media) to rebuild the neighborhoods of blacks. The war took their children rather than the college-age children of the affluent. In all respects, working class status appears to severely curtail their freedom and power.

Many in the working class feel trapped. They feel society has limited their ability to develop themselves and yet they are ambivalent about their right to be angry. For they have bought the "American Dream," the myth that anyone can be President. Remember Horatio Alger? You too can make it if you are good enough. It follows that most working class people come to believe they aren't good enough, for despite all their efforts they cannot get ahead.

This sense of inadequacy runs deeper than economics. It reaches their sense of self-worth. Being treated with respect in our society is not necessarily a by-product of earning a fat paycheck. We give respect to the teacher who earns less than the construction worker, from whom respect is withheld. It is believed that you are "making it" if you have been college-educated, if you hold a middle or high level white collar job, if you have a career, if you are a professional. These jobs offer rewards for personal growth and the development of individual potential. One is respected for the kind of work done, as well as for outstanding performance. In contrast, the rewards open to a steamfitter are collective, and equally open to all members of the trade. Individuality on the assembly line is inherently impossible. Thus, when the search for respect is thwarted, the individual feels responsible, while the "attempt accustoms him to think that to have individual respect you must have social inequality."[4]

One of the few avenues open to the working class family to gain societal respect is by proving that they can take care of themselves. Particularly for men whose jobs deprive them of self-respect, a sense of adequacy and fulfillment, the major gratification from work is that it allows them to provide for their families. Thus, the sacrifices at work provide rewards in terms of family security.

Feeling inadequate and powerless produces a resentment towards the middle class: resentment that the middle class has a multitude of options denied the working class; resentment that occupation and social class are prerequisites for respect; resentment that the middle class judges them negatively and often makes them feel compelled to justify their positions and attitudes; resentment that the blue collar job that they consider "real work" is put down, and that the executive, who some see as just another hustler who knew the right people, is admired. "Yet this discontent is hard to organize by the left because the logic of discontent leads people to turn on each other rather than the system."[5]

What Sennett and Cobb portray in anecdotal form, Arthur Shostak, in *Blue Collar Life*, confirms in a more straightforward, factual way. He confirms the working class's sense of powerlessness and pessimism: "The immediate past -- the grim 30's, the bitter late 40's, and the

half-dozen different recessions America has known since 1945 -- gives these people little confidence in the immediate future or in their roles as shapers of that future."[6] He confirms that the occupational world of blue collar workers seems to be epitomized by the remark the Queen made to Alice: "Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place."

Shostak takes us into the neighborhood, with its protective provincialism and defensiveness persevering against the forces of change and insulating it from outsiders. He takes us into the home where the family is the beginning and end of all things, while at the same time separation and divorce rates soar at a higher rate than in the middle class and children have higher school drop-out rates and arrest records. Shostak confirms that "blue collarites in America, contrary to opinion, are not especially well off."[7]

Hard Living on Clay Street, by Joseph Howell, is about those families who found working class life too difficult; who decided that whatever the future held, it was not worth making the sacrifices; who rebelled against the life circumstances in which they found themselves; who do not represent a distinct class, but rather a variation of life styles within the white working class. Having taken up residence in the blue collar community he studied, Howell concentrated on those who, like one woman, had been through a seemingly endless cycle of devastating life experiences: an early marriage, birth of six children, the death of two of them; poverty, poor health, infidelity, divorce; a new husband's alcoholism, violence and sporadic work. She owed on the car, the refrigerator, the furniture, the house, and the hospital.

Living on the borderline, Howell's hard-living people come regularly into contact with the middle class providers of social services - the doctors, lawyers and civil servants. He gives us yet another view of the communications gap and the hostility between the two classes:

> Damned lawyers. They don't give a damn. I paid my money three times and nothing ever happened. It's all a big racket. These people who don't know the common man, the working man, don't know how we live. All they know is each other.[8]
>
> Doctors will screw you everytime. They prescribe medicine for you you don't need, and then charge you double for not helping you one goddamn bit.[9]

Next to lawyers and doctors, civil servants are generally the most criticized. The author recounts his own experience when trying to arrange housing for a working class family:

> 'Mr. Howell, my supervisor and I feel that a mobile home is not suitable housing for a low income family.'
>
> 'But,' I screamed over the phone, 'the alternative is sleeping in the goddamn car.'
>
> 'I'm sorry, the decision is final.'[10]

Lack of respect, lack of understanding, lack of communication and perceptions muddled by stereotypes characterize the average relationship between middle class professionals and the working class. Yet hostility toward these deliverers of services is not the only thing the hard-living share with the hard-working. As members of the working class, they share alienation and isolation. Both are the "forgotten Americans." Both feel scorned and looked down upon. Both are called "rednecks," "racists," "hardhats" and "bigots" and neither understands why they are considered the obstacle to social progress -- the group everyone else would like to pretend doesn't exist. And while in contrast to the hard-living, the majority of working class people are somewhat better off -- with stable families, steady jobs, and their own houses -- the hard-living stand as a reminder of what the hard-working can become at any time, should their own life situation decline.

While ostensibly viewing the working class as a whole, all three of these works concentrate on the male blue collar-ite -- his position in society, his attitudes, frustrations and aspirations. The working class woman is largely ignored. As the authors point out, the social order they explored "affects men in a different way than women, simply because of the cultural valuation placed on the traditional work of men."[11] "The female has a lower status within the community than does the male, and in many ways, has significant social attitudes that are a special case."[12]

WORKING CLASS WOMEN

Who's to tell us, then, of this special case? We ask again: "Who is the working class woman and how does she differ from her middle class counterpart?" The information is scant, the bulk of it old, and the new inconslusive. The only in-depth study done on working class women was *Workingman's Wife*, published in 1959 by Social Research, Inc., and undertaken to provide advertisers with a better understanding of how to attract these women as consumers. Sixteen years later it remains the basic source on the working class-middle

class gap. According to this study's findings, the working class woman sees her life as an immobile force to which she can merely respond. Always lurking are potential threats to the security of her family and herself. She waits for what comes to her door, rather than marking out her own path. Life is dull, routine. She does not have much of a sense of going anywhere, or of developing herself internally.

The authors of *Workingman's Wife* found that the average blue collar woman centers her life almost totally around her immediate and extended family. Her world is closer and more personalized than the world of the middle class. The borders of her social life are narrower and she tends to relate to fewer people. She doesn't belong to many outside organizations, leaving the country clubs, self-improvement courses, and social-civic committees to her middle class sister. Her own or her husband's job rarely involves social entertaining, a source of many new friendships among higher income women. When she visits, it is with relatives, a neighbor, or an old school friend. She perceives her weekend as an extension of her weekday, only harder, and "is more conscious of the overall similarity in daily events whereas the middle class woman is more conscious of the diversity."[13]

Feeling unsure of herself, "the working class woman tends to think she has merely her body, her energy, and her good conscience to offer as evidence of her youth."[14] Her chief satisfaction and most fulfilling, absorbing role is that of mother. Her children, unlike anyone else in her life, truly need her. If her sacrifice for their betterment succeeds in transforming their lives, she is afraid they will become estranged from her. Thus she stresses getting by rather than getting ahead, minimizing pain rather than maximizing personal growth. She considers a happy, contented life more pleasant and desirable than striving for upward mobility and accomplishment. She tends not to encourage her sons and daughters to reach for goals beyond their own social and economic class. If a parent is a factory worker, the child may strive to be a carpenter, but not a doctor.

Having a husband, being a good wife, receiving affection and recognition from him serve as proof that she is a real woman. Yet the working class woman feels isolated from her husband and retains doubts about her hold on him. She's afraid to act in a way contrary to his wishes lest a state of permanent alienation results. At the same time, if his behavior disturbs her, she feels her only options are to suffer or, if necessary, to leave him. She doesn't believe as does the middle class woman, that she can alter his behavior in any way.

Echoing this sentiment in *Blue Collar Marriage*, Mirra

Komarovsky remarks: "No matter how much husband-managing is required in the adult household, the working class woman is uneasy about her assertiveness and unsure how far she can go and still retain her husband, who is, after all, one of his sex."[15] Based on family studies conducted in 1959, her book (published in 1964) offers evidence that these women are by far the more dissatisfied sex, with profound yearnings for reassurance, counsel, appreciation, encouragement, and sharing for its own sake. Yet, there seems little to share. Home is the woman's place and..."what does she have to talk about? Dirty diapers stuff."[16] Women are excluded from the husband's work, partly because of the monotonous nature of it. "There's nothing to say. I just mix paint all day and put it on."[17]

The concept of togetherness is viewed more as a middle class value and free time is often spent separately with the woman at home, often with female relatives and close friends, and the man out with "the boys." Each sees the other as different: "Men don't feel the same as us";[18] "Women talk about the silliest of things."[19] When they are together, a major leisure time activity is watching television. "And what's there to talk about? We both saw the same program. What's there to say 'cept if it's good or bad?"[20] Thus the main ties connecting husband and wife are mutual devotion, sexual union, and complementary tasks. There is little expectation of friendship or companionship. These qualities, instead, are looked for in those of the same sex. The most intimate communication is almost exclusively feminine, with daily contact between the blue collar woman and her mother or sisters.

Not uncommonly, the working class woman who wants to escape the confining routine of her days may desire to work outside the home. A job allows her to get out of the house, to meet people, to have something to dress for in the morning and to have something to tell her husband. Yet this desire often encounters stiff opposition from her husband, since it threatens his status as the sole provider, which is often the major source of his sense of self-worth. He may also be anxious about her working with other men and concerned that she will neglect him and the children.

Both *Workingman's Wife* and *Blue Collar Marriage* are excellent in providing important insights into the relationship of working class women to their homes and families over a decade ago. But both predate the new Women's Movement and the very fact that they were written so long ago makes them less relevant in a society that has forced changes in the homes of most women.

Working Class Women in a Changing World, a study released in 1973, was undertaken by Social Research, Inc. to update their earlier work. While at times ambiguous, it

indicates that working class women are not necessarily ready to reject homemaking (which they believe society respects) to embrace a career. Yet they have been deeply affected by the Women's Movement in other ways. Working class women now view themselves as more competent in their role as housewife than they did in 1959. Moreover, no longer is the ideal wife one who immerses herself totally in home and family. Children are declining in importance as women seek more self-fulfillment. They are looking more to their husbands for friendship and companionship. A small, but growing number are seeking to participate in the larger world. Yet participation in organizations is generally limited to involvement in that which touches their lives directly -- concern for their children's education; a threat to the safety and stability of the neighborhood. They are increasingly interested in their freedom to work and, should their husband die or divorce them, they feel they could be self-supporting. Even if this option is not exercised, it seems to have the effect of making the women feel that they can be more assertive in the home.

Still, working class women often find it difficult to break away from traditional roles. They find themselves grappling with old feelings of little self-worth, and with strongly conditioned values of obedience, duty, sacrifice, repression, denial of self-interest, self-expression and self-gratification.

Many of the positive changes which have occurred within the lives of working class women can be directly linked to the Women's Movement, wherein lies the paradox. Even those who have benefited most from the Movement -- especially women in the labor force -- are sometimes its strongest critics. Nancy Seifer's *Absent From The Majority: Working Class Women in America* tries to clarify this phenomenon: "Particularly in the early days of the Movement, the message that came across was an upper class one, however distorted by the media... Working Class women had no stake in protesting the exclusion of women from the executive suite, political office, and professorships. They had little interest in symbolic demonstrations to allow women to frequent men's bars or in protests against companies which refused women credit cards in their own names. Despite the efforts of many Movement leaders to counteract this elitist image, the image persists."[21]

Most working class women feel that the Movement has consistently put down the homemaker as an ignorant person who has wasted her life. For the middle class woman who has a more positive sense of herself and her competence in the outside world, who has always considered herself "liberated," who approaches life from a fairly secure economic base, and whose background has stressed independence, individuality, and introspection, the Movement is not a threat but an impetus for change. Yet for working class women whose whole life

has been centered around the family -- from which she derives almost total gratification, whose background stresses conformity and dependence, action versus verbal abstraction, whose energies are directed toward the struggle for a decent neighborhood, dependable income and stability of affection, the Movement seems to be striking at the little security they have. In a society that constantly invalidates their life experiences and values, the Movement has become another "opposition force" with which to contend.

In the last few years, however, there seems to be more of a concensus on women's issues. Working class women "agree almost unanimously, for example, that 'wives should have as much to say as their husbands in making important household decisions'; that 'a woman does not need to marry to be a normal and adequate woman'; and that 'women are as capable as men of being good leaders in science, education, and politics.'"[22] Yet, at the same time, working class women still refer to feminists as "kookie," "man-hating," "bra-burners," or "women who wish they were men."[23] Ms. Seifer's conclusion is that much of what creates alienation arises not so much from the issues themselves, although there are basic value conflicts, but from communications styles, both verbal and nonverbal.

WOMEN AND THE MASS MEDIA

To what degree is the mass media reflecting these changing sentiments in a manner that offers insight, guidance, or even accuracy? There is no clear answer. The recent feminist-inspired research examining the way women are portrayed in the media has focused on the middle class stereotypes which dominate therein. Thus, the study results reflect this class bias. Research done on the working class and the media has been done from a male perspective, with little attention paid to women, and is thus sexually prejudiced. While there is a growing literature on the relationship of the mass media both to women and to the working class, there is nothing that draws the two together, nothing that offers insights into the dynamics of being both a woman and working class in the mid-1970's.

While working class women turn to the media -- television in particular -- with ostensible enthusiasm, they rarely see reflections of people like themselves. What they do find is an over-abundance of women with such qualities as cattiness, vanity, stupidity, obsession with cleanliness, inability to think for themselves, concern for male approval and a sense of worthlessness unless they have a male companion. Three-quaters of all women are cast in comedies or light roles: "The leading commentators are anchormen, all serious hosts are men, and the giants of nighttime drama series are men."[24]

Harold Mendelsohn points out in *The Neglected Majority*

that although working class families make up the majority of the American public and watch more television than any other group, there are virtually no working class people to be seen as heroic or even positive role models. When they are cast at all, it is in insignificant, peripheral or socially unacceptable roles. (The situation has changed slightly in the past year or two, but not significantly.) The news rarely relates events important to the daily lives of working class families. Instead, it confirms the view that the outside world is menacing; that the "theys" are responsible for the difficulties working class people must endure. As a result, news programs often serve to reinforce old anxieties while creating new ones. In soap operas, which have a largely working class audience, 90% of the roles are middle class characters, with professionals leading all other employment categories by two-to-one. Public television, instead of providing information that might help blue collar families to cope better with certain aspects of their lives, offers painting, live drama, and high art which to many seem meaningless.

"To a degree, upper and middle class individuals are better prepared to live in a changing world, because their stake in it is visibly more deeply imbedded and more secure. They hold the power and the media assures them they will continue to do so by right. The mass media in America is generally supportive of the middle and upper classes, holding them up as examples of the norms by which all other segments of our society are to measure themselves.

"...The fact that the working class is literally an absent phenomenon within the media undoubtedly convinces (them) that in the general scheme of things (they are) not important, not worthy of attention, not to be concerned about."[25]

In February, 1974, a group of network and local television executives took part in a special program, "The Credibility of Television News," on a Boston station. Reviewing this program, Caryl Rivers documented the sense of powerlessness experienced by the lower income members of the audience: "I am angry. I am frustrated, because I have no power to shape the images I see of myself and my world. I am not asked. I have no power to shape the images and the ones I see I don't recognize."[26]

They do not recognize what they see, explains Michael Novak in "Why the Working Man Hates the Media," because what seems urgent and meaningful to mass media professionals bears little resemblance to what is important to working class people. What differentiates the communicators is not only their college education, but the power, influence, and value judgments inherent in their jobs. They live in a world of travel, glamour, wealth, status. They often appear intellectual, abstract, obtuse, and thus remote from the world of ordinary people and their concerns. When reporters go into

working class communities, the are "reporting on" what is happening there from the perspective and values of a more affluent and rather isolated sub-culture, instead of "reporting of" the attitudes and perspectives of the people within the community.

Yet we live in a society in which the mass media's vision becomes public fact. What is viewed on a television screen, heard on a radio, or read in a newspaper takes on a symbolic reality of its own which may be in conflict with -- but may overwhelm -- the private world of millions of Americans. Still it is assumed that the media reality is a kind of public norm, a "mainstream reality," and those not in tune with it assume it is they who are out of touch. The end result is often a situation in which Americans who do not live in the middle class mainstream must cling to their own private vision, defending it against media bombardment, not without great resentment.

CONCLUSION

As we began this article with the middle class bias of the media, so we end it. All the studies, research, and writing confirm that middle class is deemed "better" -- not because of any superior intelligence or insight or morality -- but because the middle class has more options, more control and more power. Echoing throughout the literature is the fact that America is a class society whose rewards increase as one proceeds up the socio-economic ladder.

The middle class providers of this information found little that was positive about working class people in this society. The most encouraging finding that emerged was for the benefit of the advertisers: the most "unliberated" woman is the best consumer. Nowhere are the elements of working class life depicted as uplifting or inspiring. Nowhere are the strength, resilience, courage -- qualities apparent in many working class women from which some of us in the middle class could well learn -- visible. That fact alone deserves profound thought and consideration.

This review has provided, hopefully, a better sense of the lives of working class women and why the Women's Movement has, at times, found it difficult to establish a sense of relevance to their lives. But the current nature of the class gap, the impact of the communications styles and patterns used by the Movement to make itself heard, as well as the role played by the mass media as translators, all remain virtually unexplored. Having set out to examine these questions, the results -- in terms of existing answers -- offer little consolation.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography encompasses studies and articles that focus on working class life, particularly working class women. A number of the reports contrast working class and middle class women. Criticism of the media's portrayal of both working class people and women in general is also included.

This is not an exhaustive investigation, but is intended only as a survey of existing literature. In some areas, especially those on ethnicity and the depiction of women by the media, I chose those works that are representative of the material available. To have included all works would have been repetitious and superfluous. In addition to books, and scattered journals not indexed in library references, my main information sources included:

Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature	1969-1974
Education Index	1969-1974
Business Periodicals Index	1969-1974
Social Sciences Index	1969-1974
Television News Index	1972-1974
Women's Abstracts	1972-1974
Television Quarterly	1970-1974
Journal of Communications	1970-1974

WORKING CLASS PEOPLE

Except for the major works discussed in the first section, most of the new material on working class people concentrates on specific ethnic groups -- Jews, Poles, and Greeks to name a few -- and their interrelationship within the class structure. Yet little deals with the overall ramifications of class per se.

1. Feldstein, Stanley and Lawrence Costello, eds. *THE ORDEAL OF ASSIMILATION: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE WHITE WORKING CLASS*. New York, Anchor/ Doubleday, 1974.

   In the words of its editors, "This study is neither an attempt to justify the attitudes of white working class ethnics toward today's 'third world' Americans, nor an attempt to minimize the problems faced by these groups." Rather, the intent is to provide an historical framework to help the reader understand why the white working class is "fast becoming the most alienated group in present day America." Beginning with the immigration of the 1840's, this work chronologically documents the sentiments, aspirations, thoughts and life-styles of working class people. In its few glimpses of working class women, this history first looks at those who, in their status as new immigrants,

were extremely vulnerable to prostitution and secondly at their movement into the work force as a consequence of the Civil War. Industrial work was characterized by long days averaging 12 hours, unhealthy conditions and poor wages. ("I may as well starve without work as to work and starve at the same time.") Responding to these deplorable conditions were the Working Women's Union, journals devoting space to working women's problems and a mass meeting of these women in New York City.

2. Hall, Edward. *THE SILENT LANGUAGE*. New York, Fawcett, 1969.

The automatic and often unconscious elements of communication -- eye contact, gestures, touching and other forms of body contact -- differ among ethnic groups and can make communication succeed or fail. An example: a teacher fears that children clustered together are about to start trouble. Yet for the children, the closeness may be a cultural pattern which when destroyed by separation or distance causes an inability to learn. Self-concepts can be undermined or promoted through communication styles.

3. Herman, Judith, ed. *THE SCHOOLS AND GROUP IDENTITY*. New York, Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity of The American Jewish Committee, 1974.

The individual belongs to many groups: ethnic, racial, regional, generational, sexual, religious, economic. Confronted with such complexity, schools have circumvented diversity and sought unity in the "melting pot" philosophy of past decades.

Perpetuation of such policies not only engenders educational failure and alienation, but aborts the necessary preparation of our youth to live in a multi-ethnic society. There is a need to foster students' knowledge and acceptance of different cultural experiences in a non-threatening manner. Children need to learn that "different" does not imply "better" or "worse."

4. Levine, Irving and Judith Herman. *SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN BLUE COLLAR AMERICA*. New York, Civil Rights Digest, Winter 1972.

While everyone once seemed content to be "American," there is now a move to claim the right to be different, unique, particular. Working class white ethnic groups increasingly chafe under what they view as middle class requirements for social and economic success. They are angered by television stereotypes of the German as Nazi or mad scientist; the Italian as gangster; the Chicano as Frito Bandito. Many working class people feel left out of the "in" social movements such as the Women's Movement and the youth culture. Responding to this sense of rejection they feel: "The liberals have always despised us. We've got these nasty little jobs, and we drink beer and, my God, we watch television and we don't read. It's.....vicious snobbery." By understanding ethnic and class diversity, we can promote the development of ad hoc alliances which may shift with issues, but with no one group emerging as the enemy.

5. Levine, Irving and Judith Herman. *THE LIFE OF WHITE ETHNICS: TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE CLASS STRATEGIES*. New York, Institute on Human Relations, 1972.

A large proportion of urban working class people is ethnic and differences in behavior and attitude persist along ethnic lines. Many conflicts that revolve around neighborhoods, occupations, even social issues, are ethnic conflicts and could be resolved more effectively by treating them as such.

The cultural aspects of ethnicity are transmitted largely through the woman. Changes in basic sex role patterns have a tremendous impact on women from traditional ethnic backgrounds. Whoever would organize women in working class communities needs to understand priorities that are based at least in part on long-standing cultural traditions.

6. Levison, Andrew. *WORKING CLASS MAJORITY.* New York, Coward-McCann & Geoghegan, 1974.

Just as the middle class does not come into close contact with the poor, it is equally isolated from the working class. As a consequence of working class invisibility, the middle class has inaccurate knowledge of working class people. This includes the myths that the working class is a diminishing minority, inside a classless society that is more conservative than the middle class. The reality contradicts these assumptions. By 1970, the working class represented 60% of the work force. It is not part of the middle class. It does not have the same kind of money options. It lives daily with the fear of unemployment. Death, disease, and injury are built into the nature of their jobs. (The factory is the number 1 killer in America.) Secondly, studies show that on questions related to desegregation and equal opportunity for blacks in jobs, housing, and even schools, there was no difference between classes. In addition, support for Nixon in 1972 was higher among the college educated, the professional and business groups than among the working class. While the persistance of inaccurate information hinders interaction within the society at large, it has grave consequences for American liberals and the Democratic party in particular.

WOMEN

When looking at women's attitudes and roles, researchers tend to draw the line between working women and homemakers, regardless of class. It is felt that this is where women's differences are most apparent. What is important is bringing home money, being connected to the outside world, and having a sense of self separate from her family, not what job a woman holds, her family background, her income, or her ethnicity. Thus there is little existing information pertaining specifically to working class women.

7. Harris, Lou and Associates. *THE 1972 VIRGINIA SLIMS AMERICAN WOMEN'S OPINION POLL.* New York.

While support for efforts to change women's status appears to be growing, the phrase "Women's Liberation" remains an emotionally charged one with negative connotations for

most blue collar women. They look negatively at such behavior as demonstrating, picketing, marching. In all categories, women most enthusiastic about change are the young, single, black, poor, affluent and well-educated.

8. Quinn, Alice. *INSANITY AND CONTROL.* Quest, A Feminist Quarterly, Fall, 1974.

Psychotherapy, both traditional and innovative forms, oppresses working class women. By the middle class standards of most therapists, working class women are often wrongly diagnosed as deviant. Virtually all psychoanalytic literature focuses on the problems of the middle class. Ninety-five percent of psychiatrists identify themselves as middle class. Studies show that they prefer middle class patients and dislike those from working and lower class backgrounds. "They are 'irritated by these people's inability to think in their terms... They are repelled by their crude, vulgar language, their outbursts of violence, at times by their apathy or indifference, and by their endurance of poverty and economic insecurity.'"

9. Seifer, Nancy. *BARBARA MIKULSKI AND THE BLUE COLLAR WOMAN.* Ms Magazine, November 1973.

The blue collar woman is reared conventionally to be a wife and mother. She has few choices open to her and "self-actualization" has little meaning in her life. In the media, she is pictured as Rosie-the-Riveter and the wife in the movie "Joe." "She wears tacky clothes, likes plastic flowers, reads True Confessions...and has an I.Q. of 47."

"America is not a melting pot," says Barbara Mikulski. "The ethnic worker is fooled into thinking that the blacks are getting everything. Old prejudices and new fears are ignited. The two groups end up fighting each other for the same jobs and competing for the new schools and recreation centers. What results is an angry confrontation for

tokens, when there should be an alliance for a whole new agenda."

10. Terkel, Studs. *BEING THE WOMAN IN ONE OF AMERICA'S SCORNED FAMILIES.* Today's Health, February, 1972.

The story of Diane Romano and Florence Scala who fought a losing battle to save their neighborhood. "We may have lost but I feel a lot of us won. When it all started, they figured it was just a bunch of housewives. Now Florence is looked up to with respect as a leader of the community. And, me, who'd've thought that me, a mother of six kids, would get up and speak at City Council? I was so surprised when I spoke up, my voice so strong. It has to be a spirit that's inside that's doing the talking." Neither of these women, or the others Terkel describes, are Archie's Dingbat.

11. The Roper Organization Inc. *THE VIRGINIA SLIMS WOMEN'S OPINION POLL, VOLUME III.* 1974.

While the 1972 Virginia Slims Poll measured women's views of themselves in the specific areas of politics, the economy, and the Women's Movement, the 1974 poll tries to get closer to the thoughts and feelings of women in such areas as love, marriage, divorce, family relationships, work. While all the polls take into account the education, age, race and region of respondents, there is no way to accurately determine class differences. The 1974 poll implies that while concensus on women's issues continues to grow in all areas, the white working class woman still remains the most resistant to change.

12. Warren, Rachelle, Ph.D. *HELPING NETWORKS IN THE URBAN COMMUNITY.* Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of Michigan, March 1975.

Job layoffs are taking a far greater emotional toll on the unemployed blue collar woman than on her employed blue collar and white collar counterparts, or on males of either job status. It is blue collar women who are the last hired and first fired. They have the most problems and receive the least help in coping. The blue collar man

relies on his co-workers. White collar workers are more likely to rely on the services of formal professional agencies. Both white collar and blue collar men receive support from their wives. Blue collar women are the most isolated group in terms of concrete and emotional problem-solving.

13. *WAYS OF AVOIDING CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS.* Women: A Journal of Liberation. Spring 1972.

The working class often feels oppressed and patronized by the middle class, who they feel view them as a faceless mass, not as individuals. The middle class sees itself as more intelligent instead of more privileged. If progressive social movements are to succeed, middle class women need to develop greater sensitivity to questions of class.

14. *WOMEN'S BIAS TOWARD OTHER WOMEN.* Intellect, March 1973.

A study by three Connecticut College psychologists shows that women are biased when they evaluate other women until those women prove themselves by award, trophy, or other obvious measures of success. Moreover, groups that feel themselves to be the target of prejudice tend to accept the attitudes of the dominant majority. These same women are prejudiced against others who violate accepted modes of behavior, not against the dominant group who perform the roles they themselves have designated as acceptable.

15. Yankelovich, Daniel and Inc. *DIFFERING VALUES OF COLLEGE AND NONCOLLEGE WOMEN.* 1973.

Noncollege women support equal pay for equal work and are no longer committed to the idea that the man is the main decision maker in the family. Yet they are more hesitant about more "radical" concepts. Noncollege women hold a curious blend of traditional views and those of the Movement. Those areas where there are strong differences are:

Noncollege women strongly support the notions that: a man

should be a good provider; that he put family above all else; that he show courtesy and respect; that he have a strong view of right and wrong.

Noncollege women do not support the beliefs that: a woman's place is in the home is nonsense; that a woman's relationship to another woman is as important as her relationship to a man; that there is almost no job a woman can't do as well as a man; that having a career is as satisfying as being a mother and wife.

MEDIA

Criticism of the media has concentrated mostly on commercials. It has been generated largely by feminists who see women portrayed as unintelligent sex objects, dependent and tied to a husband and home. They want this replaced with portrayals showing more women who work, are independent, and at least of average intelligence. There has been little mention of working class women.

16. Astrachan, Anthony. *LIFE CAN BE BEAUTIFUL/RELEVANT.* New York Times Magazine, March 23, 1975.

The search for relevance has led daytime television drama to deal with social issues like drugs and venereal disease, and to take feminist positions on abortion and work. "One Life to Live," as one example of change, tries for greater social realism by having an important set of characters who are both blue collar and ethnic, whereas most soap operas merely drop an occasional Italian or Jewish name for a superficial appearance of contemporary relevance.

17. Baltera, Lorraine. *THE WORKING WOMAN'S COME A LONG WAY, BUT CAN ADVERTISERS FIND HER?* Advertising Age. July, 22, 1974.

"Advertising people do not yet understand how the female consumer lives or how she learns, a study by the Behavior Research Institute explains." Too many marketers still picture the female consumer as fudging the checkbook or lying about her age. A New York Times Magazine

study indicates that the portrayal of women in TV commercials is generally considered insulting and demeaning. Unless one is aware of the woman's total behavior, of what she is conditioned to respond to under what situations, products or new ads may well present a stimulus that arouses an avoidance response.

18. Beuf, Ann. *DOCTOR, LAWYER, HOUSEHOLD DRUDGE.* Journal of Communications. Spring 1974.

Studying children born since the re-emergence of the Women's Movement, it is found that 70% of the boys and 73% of the girls chose stereotypical careers for themselves. Asked what they would be if they were the opposite sex, many girls answered that their other sex ambition was their true ambition, but that it couldn't be realized because of their sex. When this was pursued, it was found that TV cartoon characters were the cause of this misconception. Boys, on the other hand, thought it a very strange question, something they had not thought of before. One boy answered, "A girl? Oh, if I were a girl, I'd have to grow up to be nothing." Children are still learning traditional, sex-linked role types and data indicates that the more children watch television, the more likely this is to continue.

19. Courtney, Alice and Thomas Whipple. *WOMEN IN TV COMMERCIALS.* Journal of Communications. Spring 1974.

A study of TV commercials showed the followirg results:

--Men compose 87-89% of all voice-overs.
--While men and women are about equal as product representatives, women dominate during the day, men during the evening.
--75% of the commercials using a female are for products found in the bathroom or kitchen, with the woman demonstrating its use. She tends to be a young, middle class housewife. The male product repre-

sentative is older and tells the woman what to do and why.
--Men are engaged in twice as many different occupations as working women; in their infrequent appearances, women are cast in traditional female occupations with low status.

20. Downing, Mildred. *HEROINE OF THE DAYTIME SERIAL.* Journal of Communications. Spring 1974.

Characters in soap operas are overwhelmingly middle class, equally divided between men and women. Blue collar workers are almost totally absent. Women are younger than the men and show a greater deterioration of occupational status as they grow older. Yet professional women are portrayed sympathetically and housewives are shown to be intelligent, self-reliant and articulate.

"The woman of the daytime serial is, above all, a human being. She is liked and respected by her male acquaintances, not merely sought as a sex object as she is in prime time television. She is a responsible member of a family structure. Her opinions are solicited and acted upon. She enjoys the friendship of other women. Of all the dramatic characters seen on television, she may be the most worthy of emulation."

21. Grant, D. *WOMEN'S LIB FUME AT INSULTING ADS.* Advertising Age. June 27, 1970.

Franchelle Cadwell, president of Cadwell Davis Co., says ads depict housewives "as creatures with infantile fantasies and a cleanliness neurosis. For the life begins and ends with a clean wash, clean teeth, clean floors, clean breath, and now a clean vagina. Their childlike fantasies best respond to giants in washing machines and little men in boats who paddle around their toilets. They have either the mentality of a six-year old or they are suffering from acute brain damage..." Yet other ad women defend ads and say that those most criticized by women are the very ads that receive the best response.

22. Fisk, Margaret Cronin. *STEINEM KNOCKS NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF WOMEN'S ISSUES.* Editor & Publisher. May 5, 1973.

The news picks up only the sidelines, the obscure, a strange conversation. Bra-burning, which never occurred, is an example. Projection of the Movement has not focused on the real issues that confront all women and have survival connotations, but on the sensational aspects.

23. Flora, Cornelia Butler. *THE PASSIVE FEMALE: HER COMPARATIVE IMAGE BY CLASS AND CULTURE IN WOMEN'S MAGAZINE FICTION.* Ladies Home Journal. April 1970.

Studying the three magazines most read by working class women (True Confessions, Modern Romances, and True Love) and the two largest magazines read by middle class women (Red Book and Cosmopolitan) and the following was detected:

--Female dependence was portrayed as a more desirable trait in middle class fiction than in working class fiction.
--Plot resolution by female characters was more pervasive in working class fiction than in middle class fiction.
--While more working class characters were employed, middle class characters had more meaningful occupations.
--Middle class fiction showed more class mobility.
--Only in working class fiction did women continue working after marriage.
--Middle class stories showed ineffectuality as desirable twice as often as did working class fiction.

24. Franzwa, Helen. *WORKING WOMEN IN FACT AND FICTION.* Journal of Communications. Spring 1974.

Looking at sex role stereotyping, studies show that four-year old children are more set in feminine and masculine roles than three-year olds. Other studies of college women indicate that the male's image of women is highly influential in shaping the female's self-image as either a housewife or a career person.

Yet, the media plays even a more important role in sex stereotyping. The image of women in the media discourages women from

entering nontraditional employment fields. The author's study of female roles in women's magazine fiction found that women are portrayed in one of four ways: single and looking for a husband; housewife and mother; spinster; widowed or divorced. The single element defining all women is the presence or absence of a man in her life. Out of 155 major characters in the magazine fiction study, only two women were married, childless, and free of problems caused by their work.

25. Gutman, Jonathan. *SELF-CONCEPTS AND TELEVISION VIEWING AMONG WOMEN*. Public Opinion Quarterly. Fall 1973.

A 1970 Los Angeles survey asked women to describe their self-concepts and ideal self-concepts. Women were divided into heavy viewers -- who tended to be less educated and at lower economic levels -- and light viewers. The latter rated highest on perceiving themselves as more active and autonomous. The former saw themselves as more sociable and respected by others. Regarding their ideal self-concepts, the light viewers wanted to have more confidence in themselves while the heavy viewers wanted to be more aggressive and exert greater leadership.

26. Loud, Pat and Nora Johnson. *PAT LOUD, A WOMAN'S STORY*. Television Quarterly. Spring 1974.

A letter from a working class man read: "The American dream in living explosion. There you are, a beautiful, intelligent, and affluent American family exploding all the myths and fantasies of what brings happiness. We're not the only ones. The rich, the beautiful, the bright...have all got it the same as the rest of us."

27. Streicher, Helen White. *THE GIRLS IN CARTOONS*. Journal of Communications. Spring 1974.

In the world of cartoons, female characters are generally less numerous, have fewer lines, play fewer "lead" roles, are less active, occupy fewer positions of responsibility, are quieter, and are more predominately juvenile than males.

Many cartoons are all male. Typical lines of female characters when they appear are of the "Help," "Save me" variety. In many activities where the girl shows skill, her performance is then duplicated by an animal.

Young girls are more likely to mention situation comedies as their favorite programs while boys cite cartoons. Girls simply find little of interest in a whole block of time filled mainly with male voices and males in action.

28. Tedesco, Nancy. *PATTERNS IN PRIME TIME.* Journal of Communications. Spring 1974.

An analysis of major characters in prime time dramatic programs from 1969-1972 found the following results:

--28% of the major characters were women, with three-fourths of these in comedies or light roles.
--The "bad guys" were 16% male and 5% female. Killed females were three times as numerous as female killers, while male killers outnumbered killed males 2-to-1.
--two-thirds of the women were not employed and those working were either in low status jobs or professionals in health, education, or the entertainment world.

In general, men are portrayed as active, independent, employed, adventurous, smart, rational, stable; women, as dependent, youthful, married, unemployed, attractive, sociable, warm.

29. *WHERE IS WOMEN'S PLACE? HOME, SAYS ADS.* Advertising Age. July 17, 1972.

This article refers to a February, 1971 Journal of Marketing Research study, "A Woman's Place."

--33% of full time workers are women; yet only 12% of full time workers in magazines are women. Eliminating professional

entertainers, the figure drops to 7%.

--Women are rarely shown interacting with each other. Only 11% of the ads show more than one woman at a time.

--Other stereotypes reflected: woman's place is in the home; women do not make important decisions or do important things; women are dependent and need a man's protection; men regard women as sex objects.

Victoria Samuels is Project Coordinator of the Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity's pilot program, "Communications Barriers Between Working and Middle Class Women." For the last three years, Ms. Samuels has worked in New York on women's issues including child care, pensions, rape, health and education. She is a member of the Women's Media Council.

FOOTNOTES

1. Studs Terkel. "Being the Woman in One of America's Most Scorned Families," *TODAY'S HEALTH*, February, 1972. p. 98.

2. Richard Sennett, Jonathan Cobb. *HIDDEN INJURIES OF CLASS*, New York. Vintage Books, 1972. p. 7.

3. Ibid., p. 158.

4. Ibid., p. 75.

5. Ibid., p. 173.

6. Arthur B. Shostak. *BLUE COLLAR LIFE*, New York. Random Books, 1966. p. 30.

7. Ibid., p. 194.

8. Joseph T. Howell. *HARD LIVING ON CLAY STREET*, New York. Anchor Books, 1973. p. 315.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 363.

11. Sennett, Cobb. *HIDDEN INJURIES OF CLASS*, p. 42.

12. Shostak, *BLUE COLLAR LIFE*, p. viii

13. Lee Rainwater, Richard Coleman, and Gerald Hendel. *WORKINGMAN'S WIFE*, New York. Oceana Publications, 1959. p. 35.

14. Ibid., p. 97.

15. Mirra Komarovsky. *BLUE COLLAR MARRIAGE*, New York. Random House, 1964. p. 199.

16. Ibid., p. 149.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., p. 33.

19. Ibid., p. 149.

20. Ibid., p. 231.

21. Nancy Seifer. *ABSENT FROM THE MAJORITY: WORKING CLASS WOMEN IN AMERICA*, New York. National Project on Ethnic America of the American Jewish Committee, 1973. p. 58-59.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Nancy S. Tedesco. "Patterns in Prime Time," *JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATIONS*, Spring, 1974. p. 120.

25. Harold Mendelsohn. *THE NEGLECTED MAJORITY*. Sloan Commission on Cable Communications, 1971. pp. 86-87.

26. Caryl Rivers. "It's Us and Them-And Television is Them," *NEW YORK TIMES*, February 17, 1974.

REFERENCES

Joseph T. Howell. *HARD LIVING ON CLAY STREET*, New York. Anchor Books, 1973.

Mirra Komarovsky. *BLUE COLLAR MARRIAGE*, New York. Random House, 1964.

Harold Mendelsohn. *THE NEGLECTED MAJORITY*, Sloan Commission on Cable Communications, 1971.

Michael Novak. "Why The Working Man Hates The Media," *[MORE] MAGAZINE*, October, 1974.

Lee Rainwater, Richard Coleman, and Gerald Hendel. *WORKINGMAN'S WIFE*, New York. Oceana Publications, 1959.

Nancy Seifer. *ABSENT FROM THE MAJORITY: WORKING CLASS WOMEN IN AMERICA*, New York. National Project on Ethnic America of the American Jewish Committee, 1973.

Richard Sennett, Jonathan Cobb. *HIDDEN INJURIES OF CLASS*, New York. Vintage Books, 1972.

Arthur B. Shostak. *BLUE COLLAR LIFE*, New York. Random House, 1966.

Social Research, Inc. *WORKING CLASS WOMEN IN A CHANGING WORLD*, New York. Social Research, Inc., 1973.